

Skipper John for Hayes — Keith Mead signs on



JOHN DELANEY
... to Hayes

JOHN Delaney is leaving Wycombe Wanderers. Ted Powell, who takes over as manager next month, announced this surprise news yesterday (Thursday).

Last year's captain, Delaney was considered by many to be a certainty at Wycombe next term after returning from professional football with Bournemouth at the start of the season.

But Powell obviously was not happy with the defence that seemingly played so well last term. He made his first major capture a fortnight ago when he signed on former Wycombe defender Alan Phillips from Hendon — and retained Dave Bullock as a utility player. This left four possible centre halves at the club and threw a question mark on both Keith Mead and Delaney.

On Wednesday, Powell told Delaney of his decision and also obtained the signature of Mead who will partner Phillips at centre back for the new campaign.

Announcing the news, Powell said: "I gave this matter a good deal of thought because I respect John Delaney as a player. But with three or four defenders, I had to release one of them.

"Last season the central defence looked a little slow at times and I feel the Mead-Phillips combination will be best. They proved their worth two seasons ago."

John Delaney was not too surprised over the new manager's decision when I spoke to him. "I was apprehensive about the situation and delayed signing a new contract for the club. I realised that I might not be Ted's type of player and therefore it's no real shock to me. If I had been happy with the situation I would have signed on for Wycombe straight away.

"I would rather play for Wycombe than any other club —

and I thought I was playing well enough last season. I was a little sad I wasn't asked to sign on."

Immediately he was told of his release, John contacted his former manager at Slough Town, Bob Gibbs, who is now the Hayes boss. He will sign for Hayes this week and renew his relationship with Gibbs that lasted five seasons at Slough. John said that his respect for Gibbs was the reason why he would not consider other, possibly more lucrative offers, from other clubs.

The news of Delaney's departure will come as a surprise to many Wycombe followers, who although having some reservations about his return to the club last season, grew to respect the player after some fine performances on the field.

Centre half Delaney, who won 16 England amateur caps, is still one of the top defenders on the Rothmans Isthmian League circuit and with Mead, did much to push the Blues up into second place in Division One. About the only criticism of the Delaney-

Mead partnership was lack of pace and Ted Powell obviously hopes that the signing of Phillips will add more mobility.

Keith Mead, who has been remarkably consistent over the last two years and played in all 42 league matches last season, told me he was pleased to have signed a new contract and admitted to being surprised by the decision to release Delaney. "Both Alan and John are fine competitors and both are assets to any club. I enjoyed playing with John and I'm sure there will be no shortage of clubs for him."

"Big John" will still be going on tour tonight (Friday) when the club leaves for Italy.

Delaney, 33, joined Wycombe in 1970 and spent four seasons with the club before accepting an offer to turn professional with John Bond at Bournemouth. In his two years with the Third Division club he played several times for the first team and then re-joined his former colleagues at Loakes Park at the start of the season, ironically replacing Alan Phillips. S.E.